

is covered; and, in this case, the builder lets off his houses, thus receiving one year's rent before he himself is called on. The work, run up green and in skeleton, ill-completed, is plastered over, gets a surface of paint, and is tenanted with confidence on leases of 7, 14, or 21 years; and the tenant is little solicitous about the durability of the house, seeing that he can relinquish at the termination of seven years.

Before the Buildings' Act passed, and that the thickness of walls was regulated according to the scale of the structure; numberless were the instances of subsidence in foundation, and prostration of whole ranges of houses.

Since that enactment, such accidents (if that can be called an accident, which falls out from a defective design), have been of very rare occurrence; but even since the district surveyor has been enabled by that Act to interpose his authority, several houses have sunk, chiefly through the excessive rapidity of carrying up high walled fabrics, and perhaps upon loose or mixed, or watery subsoils.

By the way, this Buildings' Act, though in most respects useful, has been discovered to be, in the working, not only harassing to the architect, expensive, and often tyrannical, but to be also very imperfect in its provisions, and prescribing in many cases general rules, which cannot be applicable in all cases—and stopping short where restriction ought to be interposed.

But this is perhaps beside the present consideration, which touches the selfish policy of grasping landlords, who on short leases, obtain the outlay of capital beyond computation on estates, that in one, two, or at most three generations, must fall in to their family inheritance.

There are many estates in the metropolis which fifty years back were worth 3*l.* an acre, as cow pasture and dairy ground, now realising from 1,000*l.* to 2,000*l.* per acre per annum! Many within thirty years, which were brickfield roughs, now return half that rental, and in another generation these same estates on which the property of thousands has been outlaid, will, in some instances, yield, to the colossal proprietors, from 100,000*l.* to 500,000*l.* per annum!

Throughout the continent of Europe, no men are to be found so prodigal of their families' substance as to build upon a terminable lease—no, not even in Paris—for every founder of a house will have his own freehold, and will build on no other. No, this custom is purely English, and as even in the rural parts of the country it is not usual to build on leases, but only in towns, it may be called the borough English custom. It is true that much English territory is in the hands of the Church, and here, as no title in perpetuity can be given, we sometimes find a flimsy structure run up, or an inconsequent repair performed; indeed, the general aspect of Church property is, on this account, much inferior to the surrounding country; for it is a base to all solid and intrinsic improvement.

We cannot argue that the lessors do any actual wrong to the foolish builders, who, perhaps, may have counted the cost and all contingencies, but we can infer that a wise and paternal Government should throw the mantle of protection (a phrase in which many of our magnates delight) over the people who are, or ought to be, the object of their cares.

The lapse of a lease, on which a sum of 10,000*l.* has been expended by a father or grandfather, is the absolute confiscation of so much property to the heir of inheritance. In most cases, preference is given to the lessee in possession, but this is not always so, even at a rack rent, and often a renewal will not be granted on any terms, until the lease may have lapsed to twenty years, or to the period for extorting an inordinate sum, amounting to a fee simple purchase for renewal!

If the buildings generally in London are of a character as to solidity inferior to those of Paris, Italy, or, indeed, of any European civilized city, the occasion of the evil is not that John Bull likes a crazy tenement, but because the landlord class have systematized the custom of granting short leases;—it is because the landlords are the legislators, and, taking advantage of the growing value of building sites in a great trading community, they hedge

about their heritages with indefeasible rights, and find it easy to draw from liberal prosperity the earnings which are so largely amassed. The Buildings Act itself is an emanation from the landlord class; it is calculated for their interests, which its operations tend to strengthen. It aggrieves the poor builder and the humble tradesman, and it results in the consolidation of aristocratic wealth. It may be alleged that there is no remedy for this species of transfer of the wealth of the community to the privileged class. Such is not the fact. Let the case but touch the Legislature, how soon a remedy is discovered for an abuse or a grievance! *Ex. gr.*: The landlord proprietors held large tracts of land, about ten years back, on copyhold tenure. Such titles to estates are commonly encumbered with fines and heriots on death or alienation; and although the fees were ordinarily fixed, or at most a year-and-a-half's rent of the estate so held, yet the levy of heriots, on the best lease (and I have known estates of only five hundred acres to be saddled with as many as thirty), was found to be irksome. Well, straightway a Bill was brought into Parliament to enfranchise copyholds! This was done in the year 1839, and it was carried,—for the legislators were landlords!

It may not be amiss here to mention a fact which occurred in a home county. A law lord, the holder of some copyhold land, being ill, was reported dead; the lady of the manor sent in directly and marked his coach-horses, his nags, his fine bred cows (for lords are great breeders), and the choicest of his herds; his lordship, however, recovered—an apology was made by the lady, who, of course, was rejoiced at the resuscitation. The heriots were released; and the judge, for such he was (and no had judge), lived long enough to lend a helping hand to the exonerated copyhold tenures from those iniquitous exactions.

Thus it is that some lessee legislators should aid the people in obtaining the enfranchisement of leaseholds.

No measure of the executive could give greater satisfaction to the householders of England than by enabling them to liberate their habitations from the grasp of the leviathan lord. There could be no injustice in enacting that a lessee should have the right of purchasing his house or houses at an equitably fixed amount, according to the value of money and the extent of his tenure: the landlord would have his money and the tenant his house.

Many would purchase on such terms, if it were made compulsory on the landlord to capitalise his interest on the requirement by a tenant to purchase; and although perhaps not one-fourth part of the occupiers of houses could buy their leases, yet those laying out money on building plots would, under such state of the law, very rarely expend large sums in erecting new buildings of a good description on leasehold lands at all, seeing that the value in fee of the building site could be bought at comparatively immense advantages.

When men build on their own *terra firma* they pay due regard to solidity, and by consequence to the architectural elevation of the tenement, which is then destined for posterity, as well as for the convenience and surety of the designer.

As at present, under the evil of transitory property, men build against time, not for time. A practical builder can calculate his erection for the range of 30, 40, 50, or 90 years, just as an engineer may the range of a shell which is intended to explode at the termination of a given parabola.

By such a measure architecture must improve; the security of the public must be increased in their habitations; it would repay amply to make houses fire-proof, more solid, and more ornamental; but, above all, such a law would put a stop to the growing sin of the rich, who are "adding house to house, until there shall be no place left,"—who are monstrously absorbing all the property of the towns and cities of this empire, and by unhallowed accumulation erecting their family possessions into principalities of unnatural wealth, widening the gulf already too broad between the great and the poor; whereas, by the proposed system, a large class of proprietors must arise on the basis of property, which will be as it has been always increasing, and the interests of the many must finally tend to

the safety of the State, and of those institutions which it is always the interest of property to defend.

Having before alluded occasionally to this plan, it is submitted, as the more appropriate source of such a scheme, to THE BUILDER, BY QUONDAM.

#### ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS.

At an ordinary meeting on the 18th inst., Messrs. C. Beasley, G. Judge, Jun., and E. Paxon, were elected associates. A letter was read from Herr G. Hetsch, of Copenhagen, with lithographs of buildings, and a volume of ornamental designs engraved in outline. Amongst the donations was a MS. volume from a Dutch architect, containing notices of 100 Dutch architects, from the middle ages to the present time.

Mr. Burn commenced a discussion on the merits and defects of sea sand in the formation of mortar, and expressed his opinion that an analysis then laid on the table bore out his own feeling, that blown sea sand was not a cause of damp in houses. Mr. W. W. Pocock mentioned, that in two houses in the Isle of Wight near the sea, built simultaneously on sea sand, covering a stone foundation, saline to taste, one finished with pit sand was perfectly dry, while that in which the ceilings were worked out with sand brought from the sea-shore gave water out to the extent of dripping. He added that a chemist supplied a powerful wash, applied boiling hot, which at once removed the evil; and appealed to Dr. Dickson on the subject. Dr. Dickson mentioned that sulphuric acid in an earthen vase placed in a damp room would soon absorb the vapour; and Mr. C. H. Smith suggested alum might have been employed. Mr. Donaldson pointed out that sea sand could be considered useable only in cases of blown sand, &c., when well washed by the rain.\* The honorary secretary then read a communication from Messrs. J. and T. Smith, of Darnick, on the use of Whinstone rubble in construction of bridges, with details of one lately built over the Tweed at Ashiestiel, price 1,200*l.*, 131 feet 6 inches span, 16 feet wide in the middle,—versed sine in proportion: usual construction, except 40 feet in middle solid.

Mr. Burn cautioned the junior members against the impression that this was a good material for construction.

Messrs. Fox and Barrett's patent floor was explained, and a plan of Northwoods was exhibited.

#### ON THE MARBLES AND ORNAMENTAL MASONRY OF THE BRITISH ISLANDS.†

THE following account of the marbles and ornamental masonry of the British Islands has been composed, simply, with a desire to direct attention to a subject which has received the undivided study of the writer for some years, and in the hope that the advance in this department of English manufacture may be more extensively known and appreciated as one of the most interesting to the admirers of British works.

It is not intended to enter upon a classification of the different substances known as granite, syenite, porphyry, sandstone, marble, alabaster, &c., nor to examine their distribution in the geological series or their mineralogical constitution or chemical composition (all interesting in their several places), but simply to give an account of our native marbles, and other substances, which have been, and those which may be, used for ornamental purposes.

The mineral productions of our native country cannot fail to occasion surprise and delight, arising from their wonderful variety and adaptability to use.

However, before directing your attention to the ornamental masonry of our own land, I will briefly refer you to some places, both ancient and modern, where such work has been practised.

It will be observed that, from the earliest

\* Our own views on this subject have been already stated at some length. See p. 461 ante.—E. G.

† The following paper is the substance of a lecture delivered to the members of the Western Literary Institution in Leicester-square by Mr. Robert Hennon.